

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS COLOMBO 001374

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PTER CE LTTE

SUBJECT: VIOLENCE ERUPTS IN JAFFNA

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SUMMARY:

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The shooting death of a local barber by the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) quickly deteriorated into a mob at the scene. The Jaffna police superintendent (SP) entered the crowd to investigate and disappeared from sight. Security forces later dispersed the crowd with tear gas. The superintendent's body was found some hours later stripped, beaten and stabbed away from the scene. A general curfew has been declared until 0500 Saturday August 6. Police and SLA personnel have increased the number of check points and patrols. There is no direct indication of involvement by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Three Tamil youths have been detained. END SUMMARY.

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Man Walks Into a Barbershop...

¶1. Two or three SLA soldiers entered a barbershop at Inuvil junction in Jaffna. One barber is killed and another reported injured. Stories include an accidental shooting, or a dispute between a soldier and a barber, or a dispute between a soldier and an officer getting his hair cut with the barber caught in the line of fire. After the shooting the soldiers left the scene and a crowd formed. As the crowd grew, the SP arrived to investigate. The conditions surrounding his disappearance are unclear. After the crowd was disbursed with tear gas the SP was not to be found. Several hours later his body was found two kilometers from the crime scene, stripped of his uniform, stabbed and beaten. The SP had been well liked in the community and was regarded as even handed. A general curfew remains in effect until Saturday morning and there are increased checkpoints on area roads. Three Tamil youths were detained and there are reports that they have LTTE links.

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COMMENT

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¶2. This incident illustrates the volatility of a population frustrated by a lack of progress in the peace process and feeling ignored by the central government regarding tsunami relief and reconstruction in general. This does not help. Although the degree of LTTE involvement (if any) is unclear, they are likely to be blamed and this will fuel the fires of mutual distrust. END COMMENT

BECKER